

# SUPPORTING FAMILY, FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS CHILD CARE



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Guidebook Direct Online Link:

<http://www.ILEarlyChildhoodCollab.org/oth/supportfamilyoth.html>

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## ***INTRODUCTION.***

With the passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), large numbers of parents moved into the workforce from dependence on cash assistance. These families required child care for their young children and concern was raised that a large amount of the subsidized child care used would be in license-exempt child care environments. In addition, more emphasis was placed on parental choice in selecting child care arrangements for their young children. According to recent data obtained from the Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Child Care and Development, family, friends and neighbors provide 63.9% of the subsidized child care provided in the state. This includes children birth – 5 years and school age.

In Illinois, parents are able to access subsidized child care by securing a voucher/certificate through their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency or through a contracted, site-administered program. Parents are permitted to choose from a variety of child care settings and can receive referrals from the CCR&R that will assist them in selecting the appropriate environment based on the needs of the child and family. Families opt to use family, friends & neighbors care for various reasons including: child's age; scheduling needs; sibling care;

non-traditional working hours: variable & unpredictable work obligations; lack of alternatives; and cost.

It is believed that the numbers of families will increase who use family, friends & neighbors as their subsidized child care provider. Often these providers are the most isolated from networks, professional development opportunities, etc. For these reasons, communities need to develop strategies that support this type of child care.

Few efforts are underway to reach out to these caregivers and provide sufficient support to strengthen such child care arrangements. This guidebook is designed to help the early care & education community understand the dynamics of family, friends & neighbors child care and looks at some new and innovative strategies to help engage these child care providers and the families they serve. The following strategies are discussed:

- Including family, friend & neighbor providers in state and/or community-wide efforts to increase the quality of all forms of child care.
- Engaging family, friend & neighbor caregivers using family support models.
- Methods for including and engaging family, friend & neighbor providers in community training and other events for children and families.
- Engaging centers, family child care home networks and individual, licensed family child care home providers in efforts to enhance family, friends & neighbors care.

- Taking early care and education resources to the family, friend & neighbor providers.

## ***WHAT IS FAMILY, FRIENDS & NEIGHBOR CHILD CARE?***

Family, friends & neighbor care is child care provided by family, friends and neighbors for other family friends and neighbors children. In Illinois, license-exempt, legal family child care is someone known to the family and includes:

- Relative care
- Neighbors/friends care

In these environments, child care is provided in the home of the child or in the home of a relative, friend or neighbor. Based on Illinois child care licensing standards, relatives or friends may care for up to three (3) children under the age of twelve (12), including their own, unless all children are from the same household, without being licensed. Family, friend & neighbor providers serving children who receive subsidized child care cannot have been convicted of a crime, must self-certify that they meet certain health & safety criteria, and must complete a CANTS check through the Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System for abuse and/or neglect.

State and local policy makers who are responsible for child care subsidies in Illinois face difficult decisions as they determine how to allocate child care subsidies to support “parental choice”, meet child care needs through maintaining and building the child care supply, and improving overall quality of

early care and education. Since parents typically look for child care close to home due to transportation and travel time, this type of informal care may offer the most convenient arrangement, especially in low-income and rural communities. Parents who work rotating shifts or during evening/weekend hours may be more inclined to use this type of care because their work hours do not conform to the normal business hours of child care centers or licensed homes.

Parents must combine work and child care, and the compromises many of these families must make becomes clear. Although low-income families’ reliance on relatives/friends for child care may reflect their most preferred choice, it may also reflect the only available option given financial, scheduling, and other constraints that affect their lives.



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A study completed by the National Center for Children in Poverty (1999) “Patterns and Growth of Child Care Voucher Use by Families Connected to Cash Assistance in Illinois and Maryland” shows that:

- In January 1998, most subsidized children in Illinois used informal child care arrangements-41% in

relative care and 25% in-home care.

- During 1997, most school-age care was provided in the homes of family, friends or neighbors.
- Families with three or more children were more likely to use family, friends and neighbor care than smaller families.

This is still true today in Illinois. Based on September 2001 child care subsidy data, 63.9% of children enrolled in full day and 71% enrolled in part day subsidy care are using this type of child care arrangement. Parents give various reasons for selecting family, friend & neighbor care rather than licensed child care arrangements. These reasons include:

- Cost
  - Long waiting list
  - Overall shortage in the supply of child care center slots
  - Shortage of infant/toddler slots
  - Finding licensed care within a reasonable distance from their home
- 
- Lack of licensed facilities offering child care services during non-traditional hours
  - Flexibility when parents work rotating shifts
  - If there are more than 2-3 children in the family, it is easier to have one provider.

A parent's choice of child care arrangement is directly influenced by its impact on their work lives. Many parents find the flexibility of this

type of care an advantage when it comes to changing work and/or school schedules.

Cultural issues also play a significant role in parents' selection of family, friends and neighbor child care. Some parents feel that young children are safer with family members. Having a relative as a provider also brings income into the family. Many parents place high value on having their child cared for by someone they know, rather than by a stranger. Parents feel more secure because these providers are a member of the extended family/community and they believe they will give their child more individualized attention. Parents may also feel that caregivers have the same values and share the same beliefs that they do, therefore their children are receiving consistent messages.

### ***WHAT DOES FAMILY, FRIENDS & NEIGHBOR CHILD CARE LOOK LIKE?***

Paula Sue does not work outside the home because she has three (3) children of her own under five years of age. Paula Sue takes her children to the local library for the children's activities and enjoys making things with them at home. Recently, her cousin Pat asked her if she would take care of her newborn when she returns to work in two weeks. Pat has applied for subsidized child care but has been unable to find anyone to care for her baby in the evenings when she returns to work at a local restaurant. Pat also does not want to leave her newborn with a stranger

learning and interacting with other children.

*Could Paula Sue benefit from formal training? Would she take advantage of training and resources if they were offered to her?*

We will look at some strategies that could be adopted by communities that would support child caregivers like Paula Sue. These strategies can be implemented by Head Start programs, local community organizations, faith based organizations, child care centers, associations and/or schools. By using creative, innovative methods, communities can reach out to these providers to strengthen and enhance the quality of child care services they are providing as well as to help ensure children's development and safety.



This example is just a snapshot of what occurs when family members are asked to provide child care for other family members as parents are returning to the workforce. Because the State of Illinois supports parental choice for parents in selecting appropriate child care arrangements, Pat feels relieved that she will be leaving her baby with someone she knows. As a relative caregiver, Paula Sue views herself as a babysitter and is motivated to help out her relative. Although she has neither completed any formal training nor had any experience other than being a parent herself, Paula Sue realizes that her children enjoy active

### ***ASSUMPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FAMILY, FRIENDS & NEIGHBOR CHILD CARE.***

According to a study by the Families and Work Institute, there are several assumptions and misconceptions that the general early care and education community has about this type of child care.

- **Relative caregivers have little interest in improving the quality of care they are providing.** From the study we learn that, although many of

these caregivers provided care to help out the parent, they still wanted training on child development.



- **Care by a relative, friend or neighbor is consistently substandard in quality compared to care offered by other types of caregivers.** This same study shows that over half the child care by relatives occurs in the child's own home. It was found that the health and safety violations were the same as might appear in a typical home. It also found that 92% of the children observed were clean and well cared for physically.
- **The same recruitment and training approaches used for increasing the number of regulated family child care providers will work with family, friend and neighbor caregivers.** The study provided no significant findings on different strategies to support these caregivers. However, when programs were adapted and efforts were made to reach out to

and support them without the explicit goal of making them licensed, they were much more effective.

- **Most families who use relative care do so because they lack knowledge about the benefits of formal child care options.** The study indicates that parents' use of family, friend and neighbor care may have more to do with its flexibility to fit scheduling needs than with any other factor. Parents who depend on relatives for child care had a low degree of family flexibility, because most were single parents without other adults to share work/family responsibilities, but they had a high degree of caregiver flexibility.

**STRATEGIES:  
STRENGTHEN FAMILY,  
FRIEND AND NEIGHBOR  
CARE IN YOUR  
COMMUNITY.**

Many parents place a premium on consideration of safety and trust, followed by a concern for nurturance and educational opportunities, when searching for child care. They see relatives and/or friends as someone they trust to keep their children safe and may not necessarily be concerned about the educational opportunities the child care arrangement is/is not providing.

In this section are suggestions for communities to use to engage these

informal providers. They are not based on the ultimate goal of recruiting them to become licensed family child care homes, but are based on the premise that children can experience appropriate learning opportunities in this environment. Hopefully these strategies emphasize ways that the state and local community can begin to support, strengthen, and enhance services for families and caregivers using family, friend or neighbor care arrangements.

**Strategy 1: Including family, friend & neighbor caregivers as part of state- and/or community-wide efforts to increase the quality of child care services overall.**

We must recognize that these caregivers are a part of the early care and education community and should be included in initiatives to strengthen and increase the quality of child care services for all children.

These caregivers should have a voice in what initiatives would be beneficial to them in helping to enhance the quality of care they provide. Examples include:

- Inviting them to serve on the local Child Care Resource and Referral Advisory Committee.
- Representation on child care advisory committees both local and statewide.
- Including family, friend & neighbor care information in community assessments.
- Conducting surveys to identify their needs for training and technical assistance.

**Strategy 2: Early care and education training and technical assistance entities can invite and encourage informal providers to participate in training and other events for children and families.**

Training and special event announcements can be posted in areas in the community where these caregivers are sure to see them, (i.e. grocery stores, church announcements, laundromats, school newsletters, door-to-door flyers, doctor's office, etc.). Early childhood training and technical assistance agencies share information about benefits to participating in training and/or other events for children and families.

Agencies can:

- Do mailings
- Schedule the workshops at varied times when providers do not have children.
- Provide “choices” at training’s which are directly related to family, friend & neighbor child care.
- Hold workshops at locations that are convenient to these providers.
- Provide home visits to share information and/or lending library items.
- Facilitate support groups.



**Strategy 3: Engaging center-based, family child care home networks and licensed family child care home providers in efforts to enhance care.**

These more formalized types of child care are usually well-known in the community and can be an asset in helping to bring family, friend and neighbor caregivers to the table. Center and licensed home providers can invite them to training events and share resources in the community. Not all of these caregivers will be open to this but by opening the doors to this idea, licensed providers can serve as a hub for training and other activities for all caregivers in its community.

Using family support models, these more formal types of child care can provide information to others by:

- Sending newsletters.
- Sharing written materials on health, safety, conflict resolution, scheduling, and quality child care.
- Sharing curriculum information that can be adapted for use in their homes.
- Hosting workshops and/or serving as a mentor in the community.
- Provide training and supplies to improve learning opportunities.

**Strategy 4: Taking early care and education resources to family, friend and neighbor providers.**

Currently all Illinois Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in Illinois have a “Quality Counts” van that serves as a mobile lending library for the communities they serve. There are also home visiting programs, e.g., Visiting Nurses, Head Start Home-based programs, faith based organizations, hospital outreach, etc. in communities that can take information to these homes while they are doing home visits for other purposes. Other ideas include:

- Making individual activity packets, art activities, and books available so they can be checked out and returned through the local library.
- Inviting these providers and their children to special events in local parks and other centrally located places.
- Setting up informational booths at community events. (e.g. Health Fairs, Family Fun Nights, etc.)

***CONCLUSION.***

The policy makers in the State of Illinois recognize that family, friends and neighbor care is a significant part of the state’s child care subsidy supply and that its role is crucial for families. As we address concerns about health, safety and quality in these child care settings, we must develop innovative approaches that reach these providers in a non-threatening, effective manner. The previously mentioned strategies are not the only ones nor will they work in every community, since each community

is different. Communities might consider developing a collaborative group to begin discussion on how all early care and education providers can work together to ensure that each child needing child care services has access to care.

Although family, friend & neighbor providers do not necessarily publicize that they care for children, they are known by “word of mouth” or identified through the state child care subsidy system. Efforts must be made and systems identified which will address:

- ❑ Recruitment: how caregivers will be notified about training/resource activities.
- ❑ Program design: development of the services to be provided and how they will be provided in the most beneficial manner.
- ❑ Administration: identify local agencies that are not viewed as monitoring entities to implement service.
- ❑ Evaluation: identify how to assess the effectiveness of the services using outcome indicators that reflect the nature of care.

By partnering, entire communities can become more child-centered and family friendly to support all early care and education providers in creating healthy environments for young children.



## ***CURRENT ILLINOIS INITIATIVES***

### **Child Care Resource & Referral; Joliet, IL**

Using a quality enhancement grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services-Bureau of Child Care & Development, this agency created “Relative Care/Parent Activity Day.” The goal of this initiative was to involve the family, friends and neighbor providers in the services offered by the CCR&R system.

These sessions were 1 - 1½ hour in length, so that providers can bring their children and participate in a variety of appropriate activities for children. Activities were presented that could be easily adapted for them to do at home with the children. During the past two years, 18 sessions have been held with an average of six (6) providers with 3 children each, participating in each session. Parents were also encouraged to attend. Providers received an activity kit (retail value \$30.00) with books, materials, and toys, which corresponded with the activity day topic.

**Contact: Tamara Notter at (815) 741-1163 ext. 226.**

### **Community Child Care Resource & Referral Center; Davenport, IA**

Serving 7 counties in the Quad Cities area, this CCR&R supports family, friends and neighbor providers in the following ways:

- ❑ Uses the Quality Counts van to visit providers with literacy activities and lending library materials.
- ❑ Encourages providers to list with the agency so they can receive training calendars, newsletters, technical assistance, etc.
- ❑ Schedules and implements training specific for kith and kin providers.
- ❑ Collaborates with Department of Children and Families Services Licensing Unit at informational meetings; shares participant list and follow-up with interested parties.

**Contact Mary Jo Huddleston at  
(563) 324-1302  
[mjhuddleston@iowatrains.org](mailto:mjhuddleston@iowatrains.org)**

### **West Central Child Care Connection; Quincy, IL**

This agency facilitates monthly orientations titled “Opening Your Home to Family Child Care”. Quality Counts vans are used to deliver literacy resources and other lending library materials as requested.

**Contact Liz O’Donnell at  
(217) 222-2550  
[liz@wccccc.com](mailto:liz@wccccc.com)**

### **YWCA Child Care Resource & Referral; Glen Ellyn, IL**

Using a Quality Enhancement grant from IDHS, this agency developed and implemented a five-session training series for license-exempt family, friends and neighbor providers. Sessions focused on:

- ❑ Child development
- ❑ Positive guidance
- ❑ Health, safety and nutrition
- ❑ Age appropriate activities
- ❑ Record keeping
- ❑ Licensing information
- ❑ Agreements, etc.

Participants were offered incentives and bonuses to attend the series.

**Contact Trish Rooney at  
(630) 790-6600 ext. 461  
[trish.rooney@ywcachicago.org](mailto:trish.rooney@ywcachicago.org)**

## ***INITIATIVES IN OTHER STATES***

### **The Illinois Informal Child Care Research Project.**

This project will examine issues related to the provision of informal child care through the Illinois Child Care Subsidy program, with an emphasis on learning the perspectives of informal care users and service providers.

The project is intended to last three years, and will involve a variety of research activities. Most of these involve surveys and other field research with community child care staff, informal care providers, and parents who use informal care. These will be complimented by administrative data analyses of informal child care use patterns in each year of the project. Some research activities will be employed statewide, but more intensive interviewing will occur in three diverse geographic areas (Chicago, Peoria, and the southern seven Illinois counties). See appendix or download a copy at [www.dhs/dts/ccfs/license\\_exempt\\_study.html](http://www.dhs/dts/ccfs/license_exempt_study.html)

If you would like to learn more about strategies that have been implemented in other communities to support and strengthen family, friends & neighbors child care, the following programs may be able to share their experiences and successes:

### **Training and Support of Neighborhood and Relative Caregivers Project**

Contact: Debbie Pricener, Director  
Resource and Referral Child Care Partnership  
YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh  
305 Wood Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
(412) 255-1456

### **Minnesota Welfare to Work Partnership**

Contact: Zoe Nicholie, Supervisor  
Child Care Programs  
Department of Children, Families, & Learning  
State of Minnesota  
Capitol Square, 550 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(612) 296-6086

### **Building Better Villages**

Contact: Annie Sherman  
Minneapolis Way to Grow  
2610 Grand Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
(612) 874-4744

(805) 681-7002

**The Child Care and Family Support Partnership**

Contact: Toni Porter, Director  
Center for Family Support  
Bank Street College  
610 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 614  
New York, NY 10025  
(212) 875-4478

**Help Me Grow and Ohio Educational Television Stations**

Contact: Susan Ignelzi  
Ohio Department of Mental Health  
Office of Children's and Prevention Services  
30 East Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(614) 466-1984

**License-Exempt Outreach Project**

Contact: Marsha Habluetzel, Director  
Clay County Child Care Center  
314 Court  
Clay Center, KS 67432  
(913) 632-2795

**Child Care Food Program for Kith and Kin Providers**

Contact: Janet Walerstein  
Executive Director  
Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc.  
60 Calvert Avenue  
Commack, NY 11725  
(516) 462-0444

**Caring for Kids Initiative**

Contact: Binnie Baker, Director  
Child Care Resource and Referral Network  
2807 Remington Green Circle  
Tallahassee, FL 32308

**WEB SITE RESOURCES**

National Center for Children in Poverty  
– Child Care by Kith and Kin:  
Supporting Family, Friends, and  
Neighbors Caring for Children  
[www.cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp](http://www.cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp)

Bank Street College – Kith and Kin  
Policy  
[www.bnkst.edu/childcare](http://www.bnkst.edu/childcare)

The Annie E. Casey Foundation – Child  
Care You Court On: Model Programs  
and Policies  
[www.aecf.org/publications/child/fam](http://www.aecf.org/publications/child/fam)

Urban Institute – Child Care  
Arrangements for Children Under Five:  
Variation Across States  
[www.newdederalism.urban.org](http://www.newdederalism.urban.org)

National Child Care Information Center  
– Non-Licensed Forms of Child Care in  
Homes: Issue and Recommendations for  
State Support  
[www.nccic.org](http://www.nccic.org)

Rural Welfare to Work Strategies  
Initiatives – Child Care for Welfare  
Participants in Rural Areas  
[www.acf.dhhs.gov](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov)



# APPENDIX

Executive Summary. Illinois Study of License-Exempt Child Care: Interim Report; Steven G. Anderson, Dawn M. Ramsburg, and Bari Rothbaum; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; 2002

Graphic. Family Child Care & PreK/Head Start: What Can It Look Like?